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Ecological competency in Social Work and Social pedagogy

The successful development of an individual is closely linked to the policies which relate to education and social welfare in the relevant country. These are the cornerstones for each individual's creative development, growth and security. Rapid changes in social processes in Latvia have joined together with technological expansion in the contemporary society to promote not just positive changes in education, politics and economics, but also to create a series of negative phenomena and factors which create entirely new social problems. For that sometimes people find themselves in specific life circumstances and encounter different social problems, they often have greater difficulties in adapting to a malleable social situation. These difficulties with adoption are linked to the inability to use personal or proximate environmental resources to address problems at the individual and the institutional level. There are very diverse understandings as to the capacity of individuals to develop themselves in a society and the importance of that development in terms of each individual being able to pursue ongoing education in his or her life, thus improving quality of life and helping others as well. The individual can then undertake responsibility for the further development of his or her personal and environmental resources. This positioning of the issues emphasises the link between socio-pedagogical, social work competence and ecological understanding of the professional work of the professional work social pedagogues and social workers. The concept of ecological competence emerges, revealing the logics of relevant knowledge and skills, as well as of the social interaction between individuals and their environment. This focuses on co-operation and contacts in which the unique social experience of every individual is of importance.

Author of this paper defines ecological competence as an integrated set of knowledge, skills and attitudes vis-a vis the social interaction between individual and the environment and the relationship among structures in ecological system. The ecological competence is based on an holistic understanding of the ecology of behavioural development of the individual and the prerequisites for the emergence of social problems in the context of social situation. It also refers to the ability to identify resources at various levels from the aspect of the strength perspective so as to promote the emergence of support system in the individual's life space.

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